



# FOLLY'S BELLS

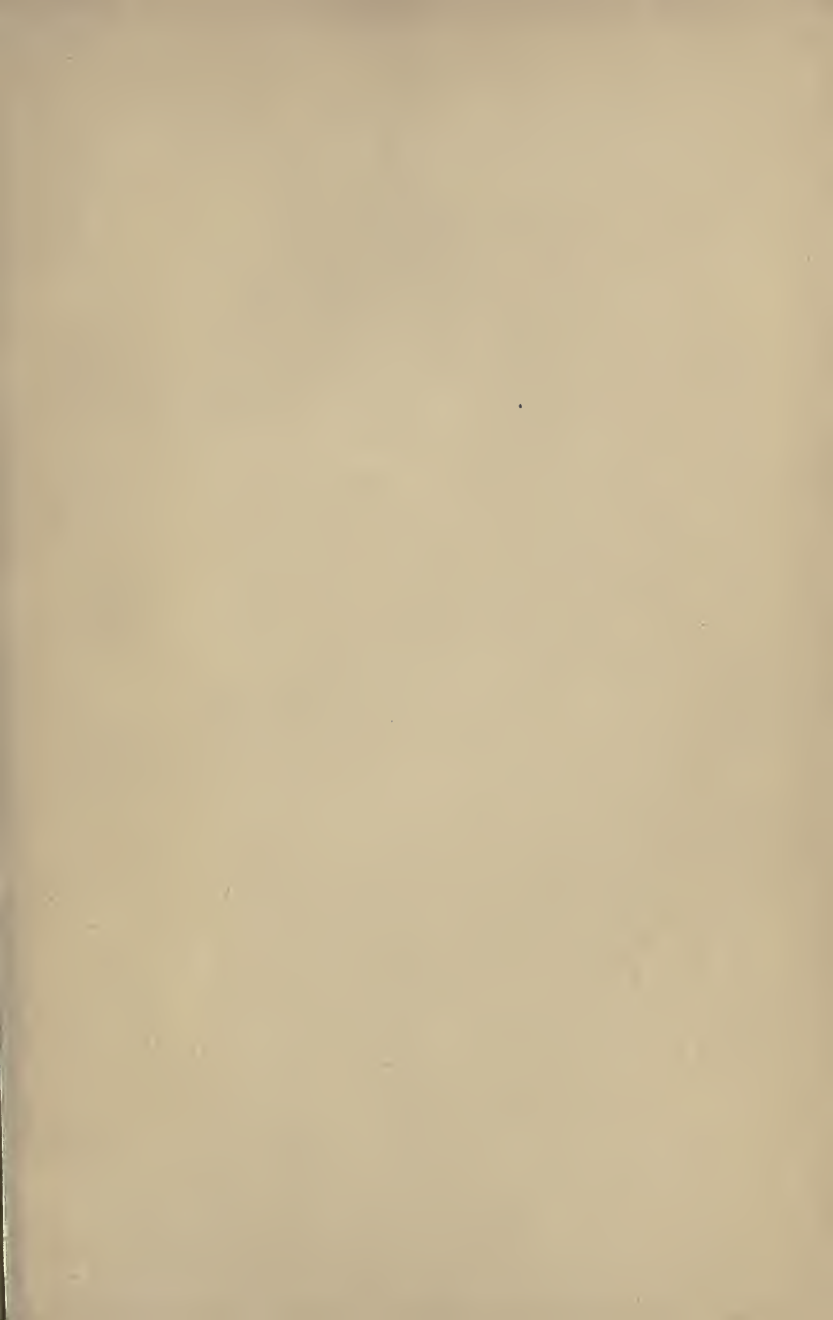
A GERMAN LEGEND

ANNE GARDNER HALE



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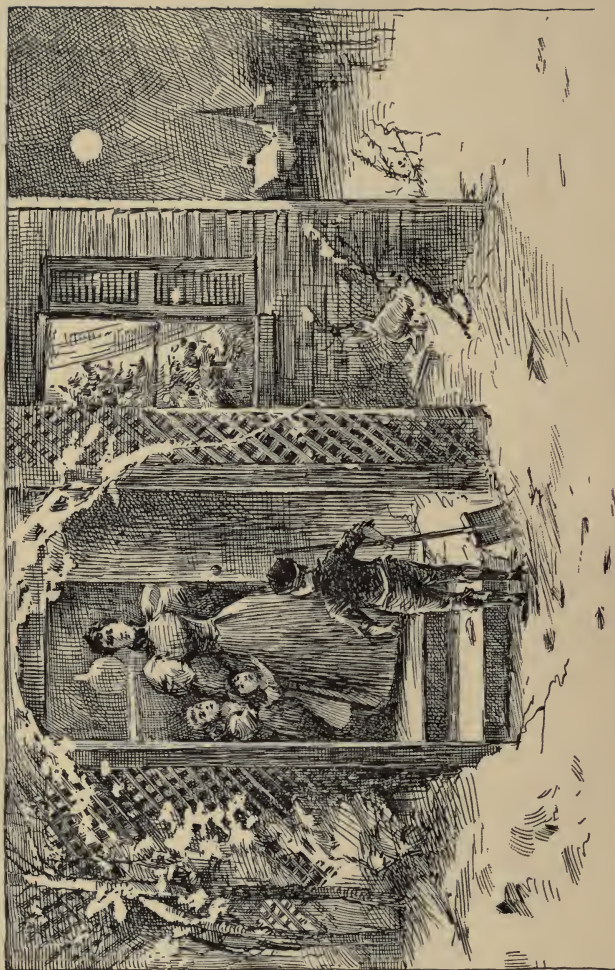


# Folly's Bells









“Impatient children open wide the door.”

16129

# FOLLY'S BELLS

A German Legend

By ANNE GARDNER HALE


Illustrations by LILLIAN HALE



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by  
Anne Gardner Hale

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in Buffalo, New York.

TO  
THE MEMORY OF

*My Beloved Parents,*

WHO, MAKING THE ANGELS' SONG THE MUSIC OF THEIR LIVES,  
SET FORTH, BY BOTH PRECEPT AND EXAMPLE,  
THE WISDOM, THE BEAUTY, AND  
THE BLESSEDNESS  
OF KINDNESS, BENEVOLENCE, AND SELF-SACRIFICE IN  
ATTRACTIVE CONTRAST TO THE FOLLY AND  
THE DANGER OF COVETOUSNESS  
AND SELF-SEEKING,  
THIS LITTLE BOOK IS REVERENTLY  
AND AFFECTIONATELY  
DEDICATED



## Illustrations

- “ Impatient children open wide the door,” . . . . . *Facing title-page*
- “ A gray-haired man, who leant upon an oaken staff,” . . . . . *page 11*
- “ Her trembling hand she hastily withdrew,” *page 35*
- “ And when the gale was spent, the sea at peace,” . . . . . *page 49*





*YE who mid the Christmas cheer  
Fain would linger long  
Joyous minstrelsy to hear,  
Careless jest and song,*

*Marvel not, if, follows mirth—  
From its radiance wrought—  
Down the doleful slopes of earth,  
Shadowy afterthought.*

*Heartsome, wholesome, else, were not  
Merry Christmas ways,  
And the lesson soon forgot  
Of these happy days.*



## Prelude

High o'er the city's din,  
The old church bell, by touch impetuous rung,  
Threw on the frosty air a vigorous peal,  
Which at much hazard set the ancient tower,  
That throbbed and swayed all tremulous from its force,  
While to the ear expectant came its tones  
Sweetest of sounds upon this hallowed eve.  
Within the sacred walls, the living green  
Of pungent pine and faithful hemlock lent  
Symbolic teaching to the chanting choir,  
Where all the lights ablaze more joyous made  
The blessed service for this festal hour.  
Without, the evening star beamed softly forth,  
As might of old the star o'er Bethlehem's plains;  
Through conquered clouds the full moon cast her rays  
Of tenderest glory on the snow-capped roofs,  
And silvered all the dingy courts and streets.  
There, hurrying to and fro, went busy throngs  
Intent on Christmas traffic or its mirth

(Gift-laden most, yet giftless want passed too),  
Jostling each other in good-natured strife  
For precedence of place or time, with glee  
Of gladsome smiles and quiet glance that told,  
More plainly far than words, of joy serene.

Just on the edge of trade—scarce counted in—  
A modest mansion stood. Along its front  
The snow untrodden and unsullied lay.  
Among the crowd, a pale boy, poorly clad,  
Espied the snow and ran with eager speed  
To reach the entrance, natural shyness gone.  
The parlor windows are alight, yet not  
For this he comes, nor for the Christmas tree  
(So dear to childhood's heart) revealed therein,  
Sparkling with tapers and its tinseled gauds  
And gifts of gorgeous hues. He heeds them not,  
Nor yet the graceful figures, young and fair,  
Swaying and bending gaily in the dance  
To music's witching spell. No—not to these  
Gives even a glance; and one, observant, calls  
From upraised sash to know his quest, his want.

“Work, work,” he utters piteously. “The snow

To clear from doorstep and from court. Work—work !  
My mother, sister May, and I, no food  
For two long days have tasted, and to earn  
Money to buy us bread I'll do my best."

Impatient children open wide the door  
And draw reluctantly the boy within ;  
All proud and eager to display and share  
With him the toys and lavish dainties spread  
To make the festival.

"No, no !" he cries ;  
With spurning hands and tearful eyes returns  
The pretty baubles, and the sweetmeats too.  
"I want not these. Our precious baby May  
Moans in her hungry sleep, and mother weeps  
That she for lack of bread must die. Bread—bread !  
If but a crust, I'll take it gratefully,—  
Yet not as gift. I can work, and I will,  
To pay for all we want."

Straightway assured  
Of this, industriously he plies his task,  
And soon with smiling face the needed food

Takes home; while mimic Santa Claus,  
With jingling bells and thud of hoof-beats heard  
Around the house, comes in and spreads his pack,  
Dealing to all assembled for the feast,  
In sweet remembrance of the Gift divine  
Sent down from heaven on this auspicious eve,  
Affection's gifts of whatsoever most  
Appropriate are or ardently desired.

To one amid that company he gives  
A slender book, wherein is written small,  
In the quaint style of ancient days,  
A wondrous legend still believed for truth.  
She pores the pages with a greedy eye,  
And in her memory lingers long the tale,  
Whose import deep at length she clearly grasps,  
And yearning then to lend its teachings high  
To souls congenial, with more ample lines,  
In words familiar and of modern guise,  
Here upon these fair leaves 'tis spread to view.

# Folly's Bells





# Folly's Bells

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## I

When the calm waters of the Zuyder Zee  
Ebb slowly out to meet the sleeping sea,—  
    What time, o'erwearied, fierce Euroclydon,  
        In the far caverns of the icy north,  
    Dreaming of contests won,  
        Forgets his goings forth,—  
The home-bound sailor's gleeful shout is stilled,  
His heart with horror chilled ;  
For there, beneath the waves serene,  
Smit with a ghastly splendor through the green,  
He sees a city dead — the towers and domes  
Of ancient Stavoren, once happy homes,—  
A wan eidolon now, the reflux sea  
    In these brief moments of complacent mien  
From its long dole of darkness setting free—  
    Like as from dungeon a dethronèd queen.

## II

O Stavoren ! fair Stavoren !  
Erst among noblest of the marts of trade ;  
By wealth and pomp so graced !  
How humbled ! how abased !  
And to this doom betrayed  
By a weak Friesian dame,  
Who, blindly arrogant,  
Mocked at all pain and want,  
Perversely reckless of the sin and shame,  
If but her vanity  
Might hold supremacy.  
And to her sumptuous courts came embassies,  
A giddy, thriftless throng,  
Sent from all realms, with fulsome flatteries  
Joining her dowried minstrels in their song,  
Crying in blatant tones that her alone  
Empress of splendor all the world should own.  
Thus sped long, prosperous years.  
Fearless of adverse skies,  
With sunny brow, and eyes  
As yet undimmed by tears,

From her fine windows far and wide looked she —  
That haughty dame Richberta — many a day  
Watching with pride the white sails, fleet and free,  
Fluttering outward from Stavoren bay,  
Or the home-coming keel, with treasures vast  
Deep-laden, dip lowly the bending mast.

## III

Ships the staunchest were hers to run  
Swift as a shuttle to and fro  
Every kingdom under the sun —  
Weaving a web of friendship so,  
And of the bounty that blesses earth —  
Wealth of the seas or worth of the land,  
Or whatsoever therein had birth,  
Readily bringing at her command ;  
While timber and granite from Norway,  
And iron and copper from Russian mines,  
Higher and broader day by day  
Built her towers or lengthened her lines.

Then cedar and cinnabar, silver and gold,  
Velvet and satin and finest wool,  
In plinth and pillar, and fold on fold,  
Yielded their beauty to her control.

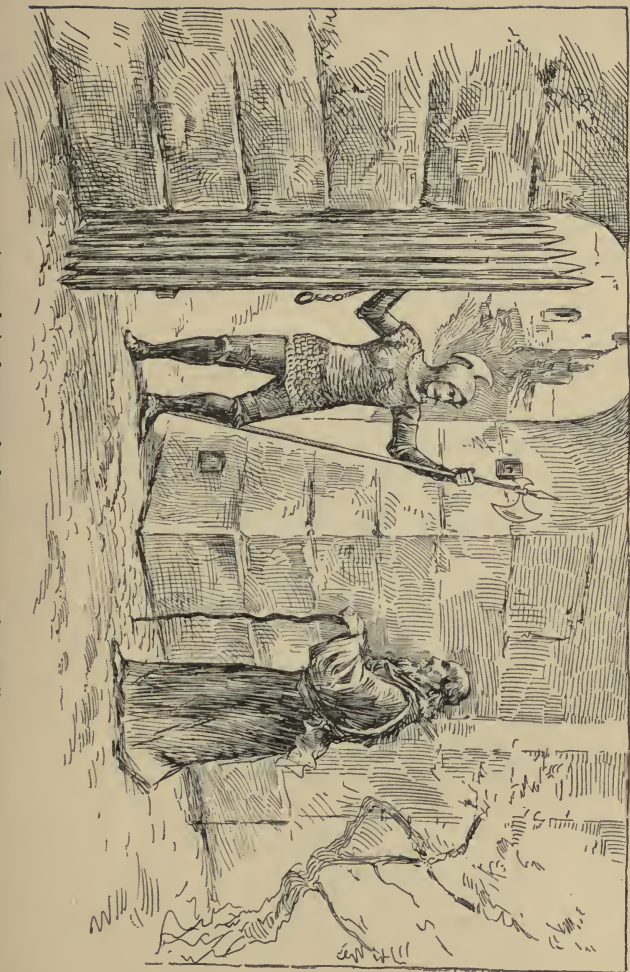
And hosts of ministrants — deftest — best —  
Wrought with a tireless brain and hand,  
Or waited, obsequient, every guest,  
And spread her praises throughout the land.

#### IV

With all this pomp elate,  
The porter at Richberta's palace gate  
Welcomed one merry Christmas morn  
A gray-haired man, who leant  
Upon an oaken staff. Wrinkled and bent  
Was he,— o'erburdened with the many cares  
Which he had gathered unawares  
From the sad hearts to want and sorrow born,  
That, out of poverty and pain forlorn,  
Had dropped full heavily  
Into the bundle of his patient life

"A gray-haired man, who leant upon an oaken staff."

p. 10.





Woes which eye cannot see  
Nor will the ear attend amid the strife  
When selfish aims and avarice compete  
Where wealth and grandeur have their lofty seat.

## V

Lackeys and menials base cast many a stare,  
And mutter many a sneer  
Upon the gray-haired pilgrim drawing near,  
Whose calm, clear eyes of eager scrutiny  
Pierce through and through  
All things within his view,  
Behold the glitter and the specious glare  
Of all this lavish splendor silently ;  
Beauty and grace of varied forms and hues  
Nor dazzle nor confuse  
His earnest gaze. With footsteps firm he treads  
Where'er the outer court its show dispreads.

## VI

The inner court — the gorgeous banquet-hall !  
Here the slant sunbeams fall

O'er crowded buffet and on loaded board.  
All costly wines are poured,  
And luscious viands in profuse display —  
Meats, fruits, and comfits — make a grand array  
In golden vessels radiant as the morn  
That breaks o'er summer seas in majesty.  
Beakers and goblets that rich gems adorn,  
Salvers and chargers crusted preciously  
With opulence of jewels ; patterned rare —  
Moorish, or arabesque,— all quaintly fair,  
Challenge attention — claim, as homage due,  
Warm admiration—and receive it, too,  
Save from that pilgrim gray,  
Who searches o'er and o'er the vast display,  
And with a saddened visage turns away.

## VII

High on her dais, in regal state,  
Lady Richberta surveys the scene ;  
Fawning courtiers may kneel and wait  
While she studies the old man's mien.



Soon, at her mandate, a trumpet brays ;  
He heeds the signal, he stands at her feet,  
And shimmer of satin and diamonds' blaze  
The tattered serge of his mantle meet.

He bows on his staff, but he bends not knee,  
Though he notes the ire in her scintillant eyes,  
And, as Bragi might answer fierce Atè,  
To her anxious questioning thus replies :

“Most gracious lady, having heard the fame  
Of your great wealth and loveliness, I came,  
Leaving the old Hercynian woods, whose shade  
Shelters my hut of clay,  
And my pale brothers, in their poverty,  
Far, far behind.  
I crossed the foaming sea,  
Of every mortal evil unafraid,  
If, haply, I might find  
Amid your grand array  
The one best thing all-wise, all-potent Heaven  
To this bright world hath given.

“Vain is my quest.  
Amid your glittering stores I find it not,  
O lady proud and gay!  
Your mirthful life is but a wretched lot;  
With that unblest,  
Empty as dross is all this proud array;  
Your wealth, a dewdrop in the summer's sun;  
Your claim to highest splendor, falsely won.”

## VIII

At these plain words  
Baffled ambition and chagrin intense  
Their balefires mounted on Richberta's cheek.  
Thrice she essayed to speak,  
But, held in leash by passion's furious power,  
Her tongue and lips refuse  
Their wonted office. Yet her virulence  
Of gesture swift imbues  
Her minions with her ire. Their black brows lower,  
And, drawing ready swords,

With angry menacing of fearful fate  
They speed the old man to the city's gate.

Then through the scurrile crowd  
Of pampered flatterers feasting at her board  
Uprose the wassail loud ;  
Full freely flowed the mead, red wine was poured ;  
And ribaldry  
In song and glee  
Started strange echoes 'neath the tapestries ;  
Smote the still evening air, whose tranquil wings,  
As of a grievèd spirit's murmurings,  
Filled all the starry spaces with its sighs.

## IX

Ere the next noon, through every house and hut  
The rumor passed that Heinric Schleyversen,  
The boldest admiral of all her fleet,  
Obedient to the mandate first promulged  
At dawn by Korthar, privy counselor  
And trusted friend of Lady Richberta,  
Had summoned all his mariners in haste,

And quay and dock swarmed with a motley crowd  
That bustled to and fro in eager zeal.

Where the great ships lay idly moored arose  
The quick, sharp strokes of hurrying artisans,  
The heavy thud of sledge and adze, the clank  
Of chains, the creak of windlass, and the twang  
Of loosened cordage, with the rustling, shrill  
And sibilant, of unbrailed canvas. Thus  
Through labor's mighty diapason rang  
The grandest anthem earth can raise to heaven.

Hard hands of toil, bronzed brows, and sinewy  
arms,  
Yours was the grandeur, yours the nobleness,  
That had Atlantean splendor gladly brought  
Misguided Richberta, were that her wish!

## X

Heinric Schleyversen stroked his yellow beard,  
And, with the air of one who holds secure  
A weighty secret, trod with conscious power  
His vessel's deck and gave in bugle tones

His orders right and left, till all the fleet,  
Made stanch and burnished as for festival,  
Passed down the bay one quiet, starry eve  
When tides propitious bore them safely forth  
And gracious breezes filled the swelling sails.

Lady Richberta, in her queenliest robes,  
Surrounded by her maids, looked from her tower.  
Cresset and torch alight their fullest beams  
Flinging athwart the jewels in her hair,  
Most beauteous beacon of the night she stood,  
Which the departing fleet beheld in awe,  
Chivalric likening, with irreverent breath,  
To some pure saint with heavenly nimbus crowned.

Thus watched she there till every snowy sail  
Dipped low beneath the far horizon's rim,  
Her lords in waiting wondering at her stay.  
Yet none durst break the silence of the hour  
Nor ask the purport of the whispered words  
That stirred her pallid lips as she at length,  
All tremulous, came down the marble stairs  
And hastened on to reach the banquet hall.

## XI

Then, with a frenzy wild, she loudly called  
Her minstrel band,  
And gave a stern command—  
In accents that appalled  
By their sepulchral sound  
The sycophants around—  
That mirth and merriment should speed apace  
The slowly passing hours,  
And with a ghastly face  
And air distraught evoked the highest powers  
Of dulcimer and flute,—  
That might allay the tumult in her soul,  
Her saddest fears confute,  
Her dark forebodings banish or control.

## XII

So passed the feverish days —  
Her greed, insatiate,  
Seeking many, many ways  
To draw within the palace gate

All novelties and wonders yet ungained,  
If, peradventure, thus might be obtained  
    The one best thing  
    That should true splendor bring.  
For this with wasting envy now she pined,—  
The hoary pilgrim's words still fresh in mind.  
Yet fruitless all her care, and all the skill  
By which her servitors would fain fulfill  
    Her wildest scheme.

Months flee — yet all in vain  
Is effort and appeal to gain  
    The treasure craved so long.  
And even its search seems but a senseless dream  
    To those who stroll her glittering corridors,  
    With vaunting voice count her increasing stores,  
And lead the dance and troll the fulsome song.

### XIII

The years move slowly on. In discontent,  
Yet haunted by the hope of gaining soon  
    That one best thing,

Lady Richberta keeps, with strictest care,  
Whene'er the new moon from her silver shell  
Showers softest radiance over Flevum's tide,  
A vigil, vowed in secret that fair night  
When Heinric Schleyversen sailed down the bay;  
Vigil of penance and petition wild,  
That this her heart's desire may be obtained.

Through seven long years — oh! weary, waiting  
years!

No answer had she to her earnest prayers:  
Yet through those years she failed not in her vow,  
But climbed religiously the long, steep stairs  
Within the watchtower to its highest floor,  
Just as each new moon flung a parting ray  
Along the river's breast, and Hesperus  
With radiant fingers locked the gates of day;  
And till the hour of midnight, on her knees,  
Her straining eyes sought painfully the bay,  
Yearning for signs of the returning fleet.  
Then, until dawn, in sleepless agony,  
Perversely blind to other needs, her soul,  
With tearful voice, in prayer importunate



Besieged Heaven's courts for that most precious boon,  
The one best thing,  
To crown the cup, which, for her craving thirst  
Of power and splendor, most egregiously,  
Had base ambition, with consummate art,  
Filled to the jeweled brim.

Thus, thus she watched,  
And prayed, and wept, with superstitious zeal  
For the completion of her selfish will,  
Nor heeded how, outside her palace-walls,  
Famine, disease, and death held carnival.

#### XIV

The wintry blast swept wildly o'er the dunes ;  
The swiftly changing sands held dangers dire,  
So in the fishers' huts the fare was scant,  
And strong men, struck with fear, hung up their nets  
And laid aside the spear. The housewives sat  
No longer in the sun, pillow on knee ;  
Bobbins and bones and flaxen thread, which erst  
Their busy fingers wove to flowery film,

In shining tangles tasseled the damp walls,  
Where seldom smoke or flickering flame arose,  
Or savory odors of the steaming food ;  
While little children, crying in the night,  
Hungry and freezing, sobbed their young lives out.

Ah, me ! the darkness of those dismal days ! —  
The cruel want, the anguish of despair  
Through pain and pinching cold and death ; — far  
worse

Death's pitiless neglect, when death had been  
A blessed boon to young and old alike !  
And yet, Richberta, all her halls ablaze •  
With light and warmth, the crimson and the gold  
Superbly sumptuous, as in overflush  
Most prodigal of life and all life's needs,  
Shimmering and throbbing, in a beauty wild  
With an excessive pleasance, counted hers  
A hard and bitter lot, demeaned herself  
Most shrewishly and sharp, an iron hand  
Clinched firmly o'er her treasures, while her maids  
And all her ministers besought in vain  
Some slight compassion for the starving poor.

XV

Winter at last is ended.

God be praised for the spring !  
Still is the furious tempest ;

Doubt and despair take wing.  
Tenderly lingers the sunshine  
Where the shadows have lain ;  
Hope with her smile illumines  
The labors of life again.

Out on the sparkling billows  
The fisherman toils all day,  
Homeward at eve returning  
To wife and children gay.  
Cold and pain forgotten,  
Though meager and mean their store,  
Thankfulness sweetens all things ;  
Plenty is theirs once more.

Yea to the springtime greetings  
Lady Richberta replies  
With a gloomy, querulous accent,  
And frowns at the brightening skies.

She is tiring of her vigils,  
And the fair young moon of March  
She sees, in the gathering twilight,  
Lighting the stairway arch.

“Of what avail?” she crieth,  
Yet dares not break her vow,  
Slowly ascends the turret,  
And on her knees bends low;  
And watch and prayer and penance  
Are offered listlessly;  
When, lo! the boon is granted —  
Whitens the purple sea!

## XVI

Sunrise shines on the full sails, gleaming  
White as the wings of an angel band;  
Wondering whether awake or dreaming,  
Lady Richberta waves her hand.

All its banners the whole fleet, proudly,  
Swift as a lightning's flash, fling wide;  
Trumpet and drum to her signal loudly  
Answer across the swelling tide.

Slowly (how slow to her who waits them !)

The heavily laden ships draw near.

Is it some evil that thus belates them ?

Pales Richberta in mortal fear.

Scarcely the gunwale clears the water ;

Grass grows green on the quarter-deck.

What is this priceless gift they have brought her,

Holding such mighty force in check ?

Who is the old, old man so warily

Scanning the tide as the ships sail in ?

Brave young Heinric Schleyversen ! Verily,

Perilous voyaging this has been !

## XVII

His tall form bowed,

His visage deeply lined

With many furrows prematurely ploughed,

His yellow beard and hair

Bleached to a snowy whiteness, standing there

At his proud vessel's prow, the light west wind

Tossing his loose locks, as the helmsman steers  
Safely to port amid the welcoming cheers  
Of humble fisher-folk, whom early day  
Calls to the seines that hold their finny prey.  
'Tis he — bold Heinric of the eagle eye!  
And seeming patriarch of a hundred years.

## XVIII

To pale Richberta's cheek a blush goes leaping —  
A blush of shame, for conscience is but sleeping —  
So changed is he.  
Her vain decree  
Had not so written in its bond this waste  
Of manhood's prime.  
Life's glory so defaced —  
Degraded — set at nought —  
Appears as her own crime  
In this brief moment. Ah! did she but know —  
Could she, so blind, but see  
Now is her trial hour! Or weal or woe  
Hangs on the issue of this passing thought,  
To her and thousands more the destiny.

## XIX

Scarce had the chapel bells for matins rung  
Ere the bold voyagers, every ship in dock,  
And all sails furled, were eager to unlade  
And to deliver up their precious freight.  
Impatiently they wait the admiral's word.

A chosen few at length with him set forth,  
Stepping in rhythmic cadence to the notes  
Of drum and bugle, resonant and shrill,  
With radiant banners waving in the breeze,  
Along the busiest streets of Stavoren,  
A train of idlers gathering as they go,  
While all the bells peal loudly far and near  
In joyous greeting of the wealth they bring.

They reach the entrance of the palace courts  
Just as the seneschal at noon's high hour  
Flings wide the gates, proclaims in haughty tones  
That Lady Richberta awaiteth them  
In the grand audience hall.

A host of wide-eyed courtiers stand aloof  
As in they pass where a magnificence  
Of gold and purple, in gay garniture

And garb, hold for a moment's space their gaze —  
Those shabby, seaworn men — such contrast sharp  
It lends to them and to the gift they bear.

## XX

Transcendent loveliness was in the smile  
That wreathed Richberta's lips as they advanced,  
And through her counselor, Korthar the wise,  
She gave them gladsome greeting and loud thanks  
For that they had fulfilled her high behest  
So faithfully, so well — the while she eyed  
Most curiously the clumsy load, that, now,  
Each man, obedient to the leader's glance,  
Laid at the lady's feet.

Thereat he knelt —  
Brave Heinric — humbly knelt, and kissed the hem  
Of her resplendent robe. Then, standing, told  
In low and modest tones the fearful tale  
Of their long voyaging.

She heard him not  
Save with the outward ear ; her mind intent  
Upon the treasures lying there and yet



Concealed from view within their rusty sacks,  
No eye, no thought has she, for him who speaks  
Of icy rigors in the northern seas,  
Of blasting noontide heat 'neath tropic suns,  
Hunger and pain oft seated at the helm,  
While fierce monsoons and pitiless hurricanes  
Drave the whole fleet on treacherous rocks, or shoals,  
And threatened to engulf in watery graves;  
Or base marauders, and vile, savage men,  
Devoid of mercy, strove e'en unto death  
To wrest the secret of their great emprise;  
And how, undaunted still, they kept their way  
Those many years. Yet all a bootless quest,  
Until they reached, one quiet autumn day  
The long, low beach of a great inland sea,  
Whose tranquil tide drew all the ships along,  
Like a young brood of swans, far up among  
The reeds that fringed with green the little bays,  
Which, denting all the coast, a harbor gave  
To ships and shallows sent from every clime  
That precious thing to gain — the world's best gift —  
Abundantly vouchsafed that happy land.

## XXI

At those last words he fixed his steadfast gaze  
Full on Richberta's wandering eyes, then paused ;  
Thus drew her thoughts to him as he resumed :

    “A beauteous land, indeed,  
Most puissant mistress — beautiful  
And grand with all that nature yields !  
In quiet pastures herds unnumbered feed ;  
The hills are white with flocks of softest wool ;  
    And, in the harvest fields,  
Young men and maidens, ruddy as the morn,  
Singing for glee, bind up the ripened corn.

“ I heard no murmuring of the poor man there  
    Of needs left unsupplied,  
And no complaining in the busy street  
    Of harsh control ; but, far and wide,  
The peasantry, a hardy, happy race,  
Of plainest food had plenty and to spare ;  
    And, blithe and sweet,  
Peace and contentment shone on every face.

“Of flashing gems and gold and velvet stuff,  
None did I see. Mine eyes of those enough,  
In all the lands where I had plied my quest,  
    Had seen and known ;  
    And only now, alone,  
Sought out of all earth's products one — the best ;  
That which of peace and comfort holds the key ;  
    Of which whoso deals largess keepeth sway  
Of all rebellious hearts, and setteth free  
    The abject from their fears ; and day by day,  
Dispensing widest trust and love and joy,  
Brings for the soul its most approved employ.

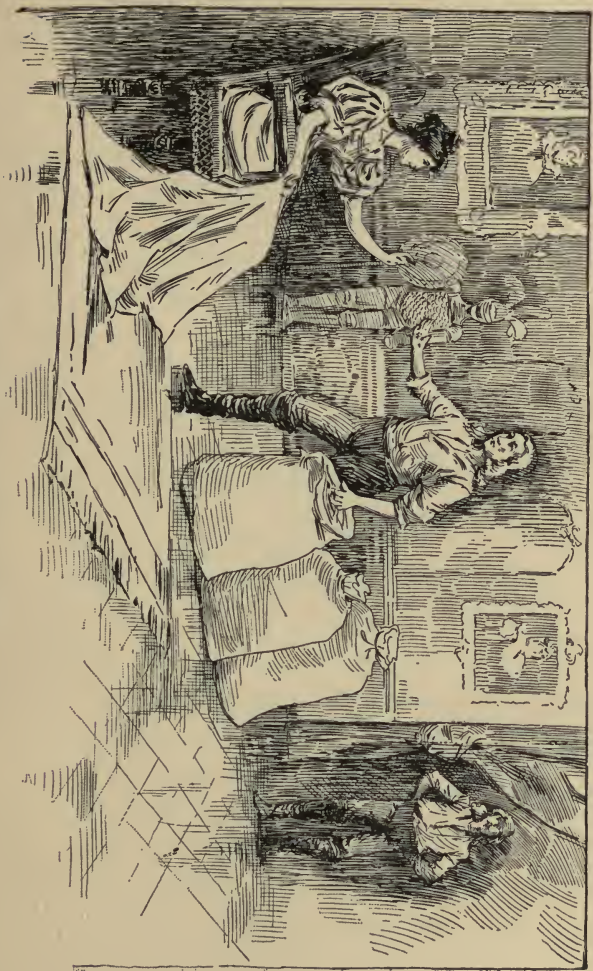
“And so, my liege, I bring  
    From that delightsome land,  
    As to me seemèd best,  
Of its abundance. To the water's edge  
I filled my ships. And now in your fair hand  
    It is my lofty meed and privilege  
To place that wondrous treasure — that best thing.”

He ceased. With skilful fingers quick was loosed  
The mouth of one full sack from out the heap

Laid at the lady's feet,  
And thence brought forth, from its ungainly keep,  
A handful of ripe wheat.

## XXII

It was an awful moment. None dared speak.  
Each might then have heard his neighbor's heart beat  
In the silence deep  
That filled the place while Heinric reverently  
Essayed to drop the shining golden grain  
Into the lady's ready, outstretched palm.  
But with a sudden scorn  
Her trembling hand she hastily withdrew,  
And every glittering corn  
Full on the pavement fell — most sharply fell —  
Striking the marble in the ominous calm  
With the dull, muffled cadence of a knell.  
As with the turn of tide .  
The storm increases, so her accents grew  
More and more vehement as her speech found vent  
In words her courtiers round grew pale to hear —  
Filling the vulgar crowd with horrent fear.



“Her trembling hand she hastily withdrew.”

p. 34.



XXIII

“ Thus, minion, thus,” she cried,

“ Do I cast wide

You and your paltry freight,

With my supremest hate.

This — this you deem,

Base miscreant! the perfectest, the best,

Of all the wealth the wide world can bestow!

Insolence supreme,

To plan such failure for my highest hope!

That from my splendid scheme would dare to wrest

Your own conceit so low,

And with my sovereignty essay to cope!

“ Presumptuous fool, take quickly hence

Yourself, your crew, and their preposterous load!

And, ere the tide has seven times ebbcd and flowed,

Cast seaward from your ships

Their hateful cargo. If a single grain

From careless fingers slips

Into a beggar's hand, swift doom — condign —

The bitterest pain —

Each man shall follow. Strict obedience  
Be yours.—Go!—And from sight most straightly  
place  
Of this your luckless errand every trace.”

## XXIV

At these last words Korthar raised high his pike,  
And prudently waved back the populace,  
That gazed with gaping mouths upon the group  
Of gallant sailors, crushed so cruelly,  
Sadly assuming their despoiled load.  
A look of keenest anguish had displaced  
The mild benignity that graced so well  
The furrowed face of Heinric Schleyversen.  
Deeper and darker were the lines now drawn  
About his noble features. Gray as death  
The shades contending with the fiery flush  
Of injured honor on his lofty brow,  
As, tottering feebly, scarcely could he pay  
The low obeisance, which, imperiously,  
Richberta claimed of all to whom she spake;  
While many a gibe and fleer fell on his ear.



And now, again, in jangling dissonance,  
The bells with wildest, fiercest tumult fling  
Richberta's wrath upon the echoing air  
As from her presence slowly he goes forth.

## XXV

Wrapped in a purple pall the sun went down.  
The eve-star hid her rays. The hurrying scud,  
With wide wings fluttering, hovering, rushing in,  
Seemed vast battalions of a ghostly host  
Presaging woe. And when the new moon hung  
For a brief space above the city's walls,  
She held the old moon in her slender arms,—  
Omen most dire! — at which the fishers' wives  
Tended in tears the taper at the pane,  
Hushing the children's glee, to hear the steps  
Of loved ones hastening home ere bursts the storm.  
The white-lipped waves that fiercely lapped the shore  
Glowed crimson soon from glare of lamps alight  
Through all the harbored fleet. But wildest scream  
Of startled sea gulls seeking safe retreat,  
And roar of rampant breakers at the dykes,

Were lost amid the outcries of the crews,—  
In their dismay, with frantic turbulence  
Working like demons at their desperate task,  
Sack upon sack and tierce on tierce, well stored,  
From faultless order wresting, with coarse shouts  
And oaths, that with the creaking windlass made  
Terrific discord.

At the midnight hour  
Out of the bosom of a sable cloud  
The north wind burst, with sudden vengeance sped  
Throughout the city, raved around the dykes,  
Across the dunes, and harried all the port.  
The toiling sailors heard it — felt its power  
Whistling defiant madness 'mong the shrouds,—  
Mast and spar tearing to splinters, crash on crash,  
And blow succeeding blow — a hurricane  
Indeed,—and yet all stolidly wrought on —  
Though, strained in every part, the stout ships reeled —  
With deafening uproar striving to outdo  
The furious storm.

## XXVI

Vainly the admiral  
Issued peremptory orders, bidding cease  
Their reckless toil. He knew the jetsam vast —  
So many and so many heavy sacks  
And tierces numberless — had heaped the shoals,  
And rapidly a bar, immense and strong,  
Was rearing at the port. E'en now the tide,  
Obstructed thus, raging and roaring sent  
A thrill of sharp alarm, chill as stern death,  
Through every nerve and vein — a prophecy  
Of swift-impending doom. Such climax near,  
More willing he Richberta's ire to dare  
Than nature's occult issues to defy.  
But all too late his orders. This alone  
Knew they (the reckless crew), or cared to know —  
To hide as swiftly as they might beneath  
The furious waves their hated freight. And thus  
The livelong night they toiled. When morning broke,  
Rest — a brief space, they took. . . .

Now, whence and what  
The awful change that in the glimmering light

Meets their swift gaze?

A flood — a raging flood  
Spreads far and wide. . . .

Heinric Schleyversen treads,  
From stem to stern, impatiently, the deck  
Of his uneasy vessel, uttering low  
A groan of deepest anguish, while from all  
The watching fleet a cry uprises shrill —  
“The dykes! the dykes are broken!” . . .

Blank despair,  
Or rigid horror, sits on every face  
At the wild, widespread ruin. . . .

## XXVII

Springtime rains  
And melting snows had swelled the river's tide.  
Flevum, full bosomed, aided by the wind,  
Had burst triumphantly the barriers strong  
That in the ancient days the fathers built  
At an uncounted cost of time and toil—  
And life (more dear than all), and whose renown  
The nation's glory reared, for they had held  
In their control the sources of her wealth.

Of this destruction sure, the raging wind,  
Its wrath not yet appeased, veered swiftly south,—  
The shelving sands along the seashore sent  
In rapid eddies, buffeting the waves ;  
And, mingling there in strange companionship  
With wasted cargo of Richberta's fleet —  
By rolling surges held and made secure —  
Piled rapidly a dune so sharp and sheer  
Most vehement current of the inner tide  
Might nevermore descend.

Yet high and broad  
Came on the river, with terrific force,  
In its exultant freedom field and fell  
Clear sweeping. And yet on and on it came,  
Its rapid waters ravening as they come  
Like hungry wolves, around the city's walls  
Gnashing their white teeth, till each bulwark fell ;  
Then, indiscriminate, of hut or hall  
Grasping a variant prey, and on its breast  
Bearing triumphantly to meet the sea.  
Higher and higher the tumultuous waves,  
The dune upbuilding, Flevum's trover took,  
And with a thunderous roar his progress stayed.

And so the baffled current sullenly  
Spread east and west — a restless bay became.  
And when the day had fully dawned, behold,  
The fleet lay anchored in a wide expanse  
Of tossing waters !

## XXVIII

Gone were buoy and quay,  
All alien vessels, and all kindred craft,  
The great storehouses crammed with costly goods,  
The mighty derricks, and the fishing gear,  
With every fisher's hut, and all the homes  
Of thrifty merchants — gone, or hidden deep  
Beneath the waves. Save the one topmost tower  
Of proud Richberta's palace, nought was seen  
Of stately Stavoren.

The sailors gazed  
Aghast. Where were the gladsome crowds that trod  
But yesterday its busy streets? the groups  
Of gossips at the cottage doors? and where  
The merry children singing songs of spring?  
The haughty dame, the flatterers of her court,  
And her imperial grandeur?

Each for each

Answered in silent language, eye to eye,  
Questions unutterable, as still they gazed  
In awed amazement and in fearful hope  
Some trace, though slight, of sentient life to see  
Amid this dreary waste ; when, lo, appears  
A white hand beckoning from the turret top !  
And whose all knew, and that but yester morn  
At this same hour it beckoned last.

Enough !

To crippled mast, or from a broken spar,  
A score of men in haste their banners raise,  
Tattered and stained with salt sea-spray.

Anon

A white veil flutters from a window bar,  
And there the fragile tissue hangs till winds  
And waves tear it to shreds.

Ay ! day and night

It hung, in mute appeal, as tide on tide  
Still higher swelled. Was that the truce she fain  
Would grant the storm-tossed, weary sailors there ?  
Or sign of keen remorse ? or piteous plea  
For pardon of her tyranny ?

God knows,  
And He alone; and how, as days went on,  
And hunger, pain, and cold the measure filled  
Of her imprisonment, she wept and prayed,  
Longing for some release. In her despair,  
The one best thing—so scornfully refused—  
Seeming, indeed, most priceless gift of earth,  
Begged she not humbly, famishing and faint,  
That the wild waters bring to her once more,  
From the fleet's wasted store of precious wheat,  
That handful once despised?

## XXIX

Seven fearful days  
Of onset and recoil. Continuously  
The billows surge and leap, their silvery locks  
Dashing disheveled 'gainst the trembling tower.  
Then came a calm—an ominous, awful calm—  
As if the winds and waves, aweary, paused  
To gather strength anew; and in the dark  
And solemn midnight watch the sailors heard—  
Or fancied so—through the great stillness round,



The *De Profundis* chanted plaintively,  
As it had been an angel's voice upraised  
From lowest depths of woe. But, ere it ceased,  
Again the storm-wind, its black wings of hail  
And biting sleet shook sharp and shrill above  
The sleeping waters, and the floods arose,  
Raging and booming with terrific force,  
And that low voice was hushed — forever hushed ;  
While suddenly, all strident with distress,  
In gravest bass, antiphonal, the crews  
Uplift a *Miserere*, for their ships  
No longer own their sway.

A plunge — a crash —  
A deafening crash, and every keel save one  
Asunder parts, and with its gallant crew  
Into the ruthless jaws of death soon sinks,  
The angered waves thundering defiance fierce.

### XXX

And when the gale was spent, the sea at peace,  
Heinric Schleyversen in that one ship spared —  
Despoiled of sails and spars, a battered hulk —

Beholding the great solitude around —  
Not e'en the sheerest pinnacle above the tide —  
Called up the remnant of his faithful men ;  
With brows uncovered in the golden morn,  
From humbled hearts, together poured they forth  
Praise and petition to the Power divine  
Who holds the sea within His mighty hand.

## XXXI

The sun in all his royalty arose,  
A smile to nature reconciled cast free —  
Blue sky above and laughing waves beneath,  
As never storm or sorrow here had birth.  
And floating, uncontrolled, before the breeze,  
Went the old hulk with Heinric and his crew —  
Like Noah in the ark of early time —  
Far up and on beyond the city's bounds,  
Beyond where Flevum's dykes were once upreared,  
Until a haven safe and sure they found.  
All perils past, a city there they built  
Wherein dwelt peace and plenty evermore.



“And when the gale was spent, the sea at peace.”

p. 47.



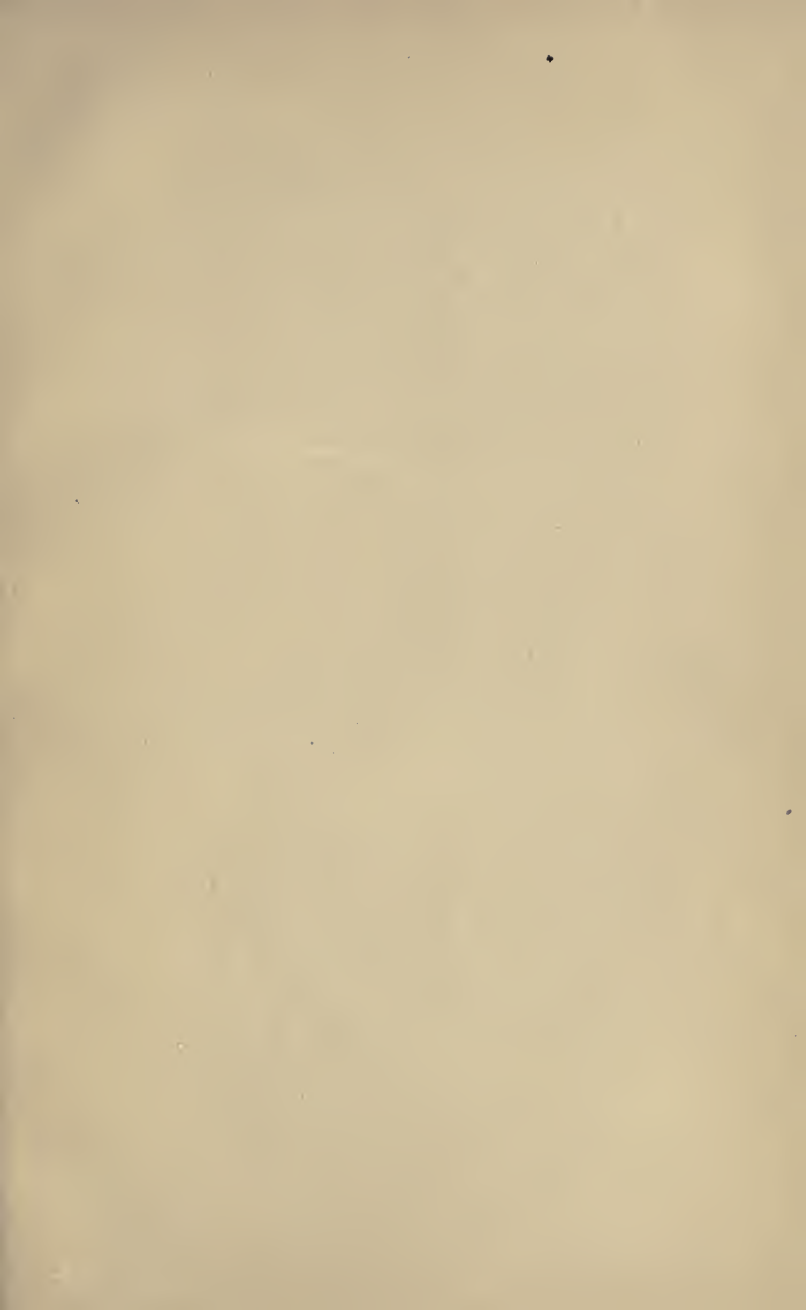
## XXXII

The years, a never-ending flood, roll on.  
Long centuries have fled ; and still the tide  
Of Flevum's rapid stream flows to the bay,—  
The proud blue Zuyder Zee—where yet repose  
Beneath the changeful waves the palaces  
Of Lady Richberta and all their pomp,  
And all the wealth of ancient Stavoren.  
Along the shore are many humble homes ;  
Here industry and sweet content abide.  
And when the wintry snows are drifting high,  
And safe in harbor all the fishers' boats—  
For furious gales are wrestling with the waves  
O'er dune and sandspit — aged crones repeat  
(The while their nimble fingers fashion well  
Warm hose and garments for the youngster's wear)  
To happy children, eager-eyed and keen  
For tales of wonder and of perils past,  
This legend of Richberta and her doom.

But when the full-fed urchins, waxing proud,  
Coax with cajoling smiles for daintier food,  
They tell the story of the babes who died

In want of e'en a crust, till tears fall fast ;  
And then, with humble thanks, their daily bread —  
The wholesome, healthful loaf of ripened wheat —  
Though coarse it be, these wondering little ones  
Are glad to take, and with their grandame lift  
Their songs of grateful praise to Him who sends  
That priceless gift — the world's best thing.

And never Christmas feasting passes by,  
If greedy, grasping hands essay to claim  
Too large a share of dainties or of toys,  
Without a lesson pointed sharp and clear  
By brief recall of proud Richberta's sin.











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